

More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program

Curriculum Review Criteria/Recommended Curricula

The Curriculum Review committee has established a set of criteria for reviewing the various curricula proposed by the applicants submitting proposals for participation in the pilot phase of the *More at Four* Pre-K Program. Seven broad criteria for evaluating curricula were selected. These criteria are described briefly below:

1. Is the curriculum "research based"? This criterion was conceived of as consisting of two elements. First, are elements of the curriculum clearly based on research on young children and their development - evidence of such a basis would be required. Second, substantive research had been done demonstrating the efficacy of the curriculum. Overwhelming evidence of either of these two criteria could meet the requirements of the standards, but the committee was to review both aspects of this criteria and make an informed judgment as to whether the curriculum met the full intent of the law.

2. Scope and Sequence are both included in the design. That is, for scope, the relevant domains of development are included as defined in the work of the Task Force -- health and physical development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development and communication, and cognition and general knowledge. For sequence, evidence that the curriculum is tied to children's developmental progress and that the materials reflect a mechanism for deciding when activities are appropriate rather than simply presenting activities in a set order regardless of children's level of development.

3. Appropriateness of materials. Are the materials appropriate for the age and level of development of four-year-old children, including both children with special needs and those who may be more advanced in certain areas than is typical? Are the materials free of blatant cultural bias, and violent or otherwise unacceptable content? Are the materials appealing to children of this age?

4. Balance. The materials represent a balance of the need for teacher planning and input and child initiation of learning activities.

5. The materials are linked to assessment of children's abilities. There is evidence that information on assessment for instructional purposes is integral to implementation of the curriculum.

6. Provisions are made for children with disabilities. The curriculum materials and plans are appropriate for programs including children with disabilities as well as for other children at risk of school failure.

7. Materials for teachers are appropriate. There is adequate explanatory material for the teachers on how to implement the curriculum including use of the environment, activities, materials and instructional methods.

The recommended curricula are:

Bright Beginnings Pre-Kindergarten Curriculum, copyright 2001, created by and implemented in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools since 1997. It has been used by the CMS Schools since its development and evaluated as part of the prekindergarten program there.

The Creative Curriculum for Early Childhood, 3rd edition, is the work of Diane Trister Dodge and Laura J. Colker. Published originally in 1992 by Teaching Strategies Inc. and based on Dodge's experiences with teachers, the 3rd edition includes extended writings on including children with disabilities.

Educating Young Children, by Mary Hohmann and David P. Weikart, High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. This curriculum began in 1971, stemming from the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project. Extensive research on the impact of the High Scope program and curriculum has been conducted over the years.

Explorations with Young Children: A Curriculum Guide from the Bank Street College of Education was created in 1988 based on the teachings, research findings and practices at Bank Street College and its model school. The model has been widely implemented.

The Montessori Method, by Maria Montessori, is an introduction to Montessori's teachings. Translated to English in 1912, it continues to be used worldwide today, along with her many other writings, including The Absorbent Mind. The Montessori associations and related groups have produced a wealth of materials to support implementation of this concept.

Review and Recommendations for each Curriculum:

- 1. Explorations with Young Children: A Curriculum Guide from the Bank Street College.** This curriculum is clearly theoretically based with a modest amount of research to support its efficacy. Major influences include Piaget, Freud and Erikson. Much research has been done on these theoretical models lending support to the curriculum. The link to assessment is not as specific as some of the others. Explanatory material is excellent, but has fewer specifics than some others. Other criteria are met satisfactorily. **The committee recommends approval with one strong reservation. Programs proposing to use this curriculum should be required to demonstrate a substantial commitment to or completion of training on implementation of the curriculum for all teachers in the prekindergarten program.** Substantial translation into practice is required of the teachers requiring prior training.
- 2. Bright Beginnings Pre-Kindergarten Curriculum.** This curriculum states that it is based on research and has been studied as part of the CMS evaluation of its prekindergarten program of the same name. There is a very heavy emphasis on literacy development with somewhat less emphasis on other areas of development. All criteria for approval were met. **The committee recommends approval of this curriculum.**

3. **Creative Curriculum for Early Childhood.** The curriculum has been used extensively in a very large number of settings. It is based generally on child development research although this is not spelled out as clearly as with some of the other curricula. All criteria were met although inexperienced or less well trained teachers may find it somewhat short on specific teaching strategies. **The committee recommends approval.**
4. **Educating Young Children.** The High Scope curriculum and related materials met all of the criteria for approval. The material is clearly based on sound research and has had the most extensive evaluation of its effectiveness of any of the curricula examined. **The committee recommends approval.**
5. **The Montessori Method.** The work is conceptually based on sound theoretical bases. In more recent times, research has shown Montessori schools to be effective. The committee did not review all of the materials available, but was convinced that a wealth of resources was there for teachers. In some versions of Montessori there is less emphasis on the social emotional domain, but adequate resources are available to make up for this shortcoming. The explanatory material is quite extensive. Substantial training on the method is needed to insure appropriate use of the resources. **The committee recommends approval on two conditions – teachers in the programs using this curriculum must be Montessori credentialed and there must be evidence that the social emotional domain is addressed by the program.**

Summary Table for Review of Curricula for <i>More at Four</i>					
Curricula Criteria	Bank Street	Bright Beginnings	Creative Curriculum	High Scope	Montessori
Research based	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
Scope and Sequence	Met	Met	Met	Met	Partially Met
Appropriate Materials	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
Balance	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
Linked to Assessment	Partially Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
Inclusive	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
Explanatory Material	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
Recommendation by the committee	Approved with one condition	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved with two conditions